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ABSTRACT

This issue of the Reading Aids Series presents a discussion of the potential for critical reading among young children and how it can be developed. It offers suggestions for the maximum development of thinking skills and attitudes of inquiry and evaluation. Some of the topics discussed are: (1) the development of percepts, concepts, and common meanings, (2) the need to verbalize and interpret, (3) individual differences, and (4) helping children organize their throughts, draw conclusions, and make judgments. Parents and teachers are advised to encourage young children to be aware of their surroundings, to verbalize their interpretations of their surroundings, and to extend and process their concepts, ideas, and speech patterns. Adequate opportunities for creative oral and written expression, decision making, discovery, and creative experimentation should be provided. Several vignettes of young children's efforts to verbalize are analyzed and commented on. Seven references on children's thinking are cited. (This document previously announced as ED 020 866.) (NS)

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Reading Aids Series

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Critical Reading Develops Early

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FOREWORD

THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION publishes one type of booklet specifically for the use of teachers of reading. This is the Reading Aids Series which gives practical help for classroom instruction in specific areas of reading. *Critical Reading Develops Early* is the latest in the series. It was prepared by Dorris Lee, Alma Bingham, and Sue Woelfel upon the request of Marjorie Seddon Johnson, who has edited it.

Critical Reading Develops Early is beautifully organized so that the reader can follow the clear train of thought and easily gain the very practical, specific suggestions for developing the ability of young children to read evaluatively. How wide the coverage is may be noted by following the chapter headings:

In the Beginning Was the Idea
The Ideas Become Increasingly Verbal
Written Symbols—The Child Reads
Children Differ
Down to Brass Tacks
Summary

Teachers who turn to this reading aid for help in deepening children's comprehension will add to their understanding of children's developmental progress in learning to think, to understand the language they hear and read, to clarify and validate their ideas.

We look forward to receiving subsequent booklets on critical reading that Marjorie Johnson commissioned while she was IRA editor in charge of planning for reading aids. The series deserves wide and thoughtful attention on the part of teachers and the professors and supervisors who work with them on the preservice and in-service levels. Critical reading is an area where reading instruction generally needs improvement, and the critical reading series can make a great contribution to such improvement.

MILDRED A. DAWSON
President, 1966-1967
International Reading Association

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INTRODUCTION

HOW CAN A CHILD best be initiated into the world of critical thinking? How can he be readied to be a critical reader? Critical thinking is a broad term—the deliberate and purposeful involvement with ideas or concepts. Reading itself is critical thinking, dealing with ideas and concepts which have been recorded in some sort of visual symbol.

Thought development is the result of the process of consequential interaction between the self and the environment, which creates an ever expanding complex organization of concepts with which the world is viewed and interpreted. It is a continual "receiving" and "responding" activity which brings about change in perception and behavior, dynamic and kaleidoscopic in nature, a chainlike reaction affecting and tempering each succeeding life experience. It is never a passive affair of absorbing and accumulating knowledge. As the sensory impressions and concepts change, so do the thought relationships alter in pattern and scope. A child becomes aware of the need to communicate with his environment in the particular way that this particular child has perceived his own special world.

As awareness increases and the desire to communicate intensifies, the child finds need for various kinds and levels of thinking. He reflects or contemplates. He imagines. He daydreams or indulges in fantasy. He creates. He reasons or solves problems. He examines data and evaluates findings. He compares and predicts. The quality, quantity, variety, and impact of stimuli become germinal factors in the development of his thinking.

Critical thinking is important for all communication, verbal and nonverbal. Since the environment which makes up the child's world directly influences the development of his critical thinking, parents and teachers must examine and appraise the variety, quality, and nature of the environmental stimuli. Adults need to understand the processes involved in critical thinking if they are to nurture the development of this power. The child's world must be planned during his early years in order that opportunities may be made available for critical thinking. It is through experience with such activity that he may become a more fully functioning participant in today's changing world.

Are there sequential steps in the ability to think critically? This possibility becomes a matter for concern and examination. Piaget's research into children's thinking processes reveals that concrete operational thought must precede any cognitive grasp of abstract stimuli. A child cannot group or classify his impressions if he cannot recognize the particular components or happenings that constitute the "wholeness" of a thing, an intuitive process essentially preceded by some kind of concrete brush with reality. There is the "assimilation" and the integration of experiences into the child's current pattern of concepts and the "accommodation" procedure through which he arranges and reorganizes in a manner unique to him.

Taba's studies and experimentation with coding tapescripts of classroom discussion produced a number of findings in the area of children's thinking.* A significant one was the profound impact of teacher behavior in the learning situation, and most especially during verbal exchange. How was this adult impact evaluated? It was noted in the type of questions posed, the points that were selected by the teacher for elaboration, those passed by or ignored, and those approved or disapproved. All these deeply influenced the thinking of the students. They set limits. They determined the points to be explored. They induced subtly the thought models that were used by the pupils. They were predictive of end results. Only the self-confident and most aggressive children broke these limits.

What can the teacher do to encourage each child to discover his own uniqueness? How can the teacher stimulate him to use this in the efficient application of his thought processes? What kinds of experiences can be planned and provided to help him to acquire and to apply these cognitive skills appropriately, effectively, and efficiently? Effective adult guidance can be recognized in the quality of the child's response: his ability to use sensory impressions productively, to note cause and effect relationships, to draw inferences, to arrive at conclusions, and to make predictions—as compared to a static routine feedback of teacher-oriented content.

In the pages that follow, attention will be given to ways in which a teacher can help a child to share and communicate with others. There must be opportunities to verbalize his experiences, to listen, to compare, to identify. A child must organize his thinking if he is to communicate effectively and creatively. How can the adult help the child to organize? to draw conclusions? to make judgments?

*The research of Taba, Piaget, and others may be explored further through the references listed at the end of this booklet.

What kinds of experiences help to achieve these goals? How early does a child become aware of the need to communicate with his environment? And how, for meaningful growth in communication, does the adult use the way the child perceives his own special world? In short, how can preschool and primary teachers encourage maximum development of thought processes and help the child develop an attitude of evaluation of ideas in the course of his early listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities?

The International Reading Association attempts, through its publications, to provide a forum for a wide spectrum of opinion on reading. This policy permits divergent viewpoints without assuming the endorsement of the Association.

Chapter 1

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE IDEA . . .

THE CHILD IS BORN into a complex and communicative world in which he is surrounded by masses of stimuli which are continually changing. He feels and senses the ALL of his environment in the way that his unique self perceives it. In reacting, the child builds his own personal concepts of himself and his environment, combining and reorganizing his ideas as he relates to the communicative world with its verbal and nonverbal symbols. It is this uniqueness of the individual that determines the direction of the constantly changing and fluidly perceiving behavior.

● The Communicative World

From the moment of birth come the raw materials and the symbols of communication: the handling, the caressing, the sucking, the eliminating; the feelings of moistness, dryness, softness; the sounds of voices, crying, laughing, shouting, or scolding—communicative sounds which vary in tenor and tone and convey ideas and feelings of acceptance or rejection. As an infant, he responds. He initiates, too. He is aware of others responding to these initiatory efforts. There is interaction between himself and those in his environment with gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. He senses attitudes and feelings. He responds and reacts to the skein of human relationships.

The child first interprets his world through the language of intonation and of gestures and of body-set. There is movement with its rate, its thrust, and its angle. There is the language of expectancies, the child's expectancies of others, which he is constantly building, and those expectancies which he grows to realize that others have of him. He acquires group affinity as he sorts experiences, people, things. Percepts and concepts develop from these early communicative symbols, a process continuing throughout life.

● Percepts and Concepts

Perceptions occur constantly and may vary from a vague awareness to a clearer recognition of the whole or to a discovery of the separate elements which compose it. Generalizations and concepts develop from these. It is the appropriate generalization of a concept that leads to the development of clear thinking and the ability to comprehend what others are saying, gesturing, or writing. This, in turn, enables one to communicate on common terms with another. Emotions are concomitant. They influence and affect percepts, concepts, and meanings.

When one says, "A rose is a rose," it is with the recognition that it carries a different meaning to each particular individual—the gardener, the fancier, the decorator, the florist, the New Yorker, the artist, the lover, or the mother to whom her child has just brought a rose freshly picked, prickly stemmed, and softly petalled, moist with dew. The term "rose" has subtle meanings and connotations.

Percepts are impressions. They are the foundation of concept development, and they embrace form, time, movement, weight, thrust, and emotion. Perceptions and concepts affect what the individual does; they influence his self-image. Adults can help to reduce perceptual errors which affect the communicative interchange by providing children with representative experiences on their level of understanding. For example, clear enunciation and good diction are important in talking with children. Word meanings must be clarified.

One group of four-year-olds had difficulty in bringing the appropriate meaning to the word "wild." Just before Thanksgiving their teacher read them the story of the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving when part of the feast was wild turkey. Later, one child asked, "Why did the Pilgrims eat bad turkey?" The teacher discovered that to a great number of the children the word "wild" meant "bad."

● Common Meanings

If meanings are so important, how do they develop? Doing. Seeing. Observing. Listening. Verbalizing. Meanings are important because they represent the heart of our communication with other human beings. Somehow, then, adults must help the child to develop common meanings, cultural symbols, as it were, in order to communicate with his environment, while keeping in mind that these meanings will never be exactly the same for any two individuals,

nor static in terms of cognitive or intuitive learning. Mutual understandings require symbols that convey the thoughts and ideas of those of who are communicating.

From the beginning children think in ideas. Without ideas there is no need for words. Although the utterance of a child may be a single word or a simple phrase, it emanates from an idea that the child has in mind. Even when he appears to be saying the same words, he may be expressing different ideas. The baby who says, "Wa-wa," intones it differently when he means "I want a drink of water" than when he means "See the water." And listen to eight-month-old Larry who, upon seeing his mother scrape the last

From "aw gone" to "once-upon-a-time," children think and talk in ideas.

of the food from his dish, makes his first verbal communication. "Aw gone," he says. Later in the evening when he sees his grandmother scraping the last streaks of ice cream from her dish, again he reports meaningfully, "Aw gone." There are times, however, when his connotations and meanings do not conform to those of the originator of the sounds. For instance, two-year-old Anita's big sister exasperatedly says to her, "You're bad!" Little Anita, obviously pleased with herself and expecting to be commended, gleefully reports to her mother, "I'm bad!"

Further development of meanings and new or extended concepts are derived from contacts with television, radio, and a changing constellation of human relationships. These lead to new thoughts, new interpretations, expanding ideas, and concomitantly to the

reorganization of the child's world. The child forges ahead in organizing his communicative world.

● Organizing Meanings

This organization of the communicative world is essential in the development of language as the child extends and differentiates his meanings. Watch the small child as he dabbles in his bath water or in the sink or slushes in puddles. "Water *wet,*" says his mother. "Water *rains* from the sky." "Don't get water on your new clothes." "Come in from the rain; you'll get *wet.*" "The flowers need water. They are *dry*. They need water *to grow.*" "Water *runs* out of faucets." "Water is *cold.*" "Water can be *warm.*" "Water can be *hot.*" "Water can *scald.*" "Water is good to *drink.*" "We *need* water." The child in developing concepts about water organizes perceptions of contrast, function, and relationship.

Out of these formulating relationships the small child tests out categorizing. Tommy, aged two-and-a-half, is at this stage. "You mustn't put your feet on the furniture, Tommy," instructs his mother. "No," responds Tommy, nodding his head in agreement and continuing to stand on the sofa. "Sit down, Tommy," suggests his mother firmly. Tommy, wearing a puzzled look, slides to a sitting position and examines the sofa thoughtfully. "Is this *furniture?*" he asks. "Yes," affirms his mother. Tommy then proceeds around the room touching article after article, each time raising the same question, "Is *this* furniture?" Tommy solves his puzzling problem by concentrating on the unfamiliar part of the situation. To help him understand it, he appeals to a respected adult. The intricacies of language often become stumbling blocks for the under-six, and his limited experience may make it hard for him to understand the flow of words around him. Tommy has been relating, classifying, and organizing his experiences with tables, chairs, sofas, and other single objects in his home environment. He is now ready to abstract and label one of his growing generalizations.

● Abstracting and Generalizing

Abstractions develop at irregular rate patterns as understanding and meaning are connected with the child's experiences. Abstractions may appear in some areas while concrete ideas persist in others. Early in life the child may be able to generalize the idea that the combination of several rooms in which he lives is, in toto, a

house. He sees other houses that consist of rooms, too. But are *all* houses *homes?* It may be some time before he grasps the broader concept of *home,* and then it will be a concept which has evolved from *his* idea of what a *home* is. To some children, it will be a warm, cozy place where loving parents and brothers and sisters live. To others, it may be a climate of rejection, insecurity, or constant turmoil. Or a *home* may be a house, a farm, a duplex, or an apartment. To some, it may be an institution or a temporary foster home. However, to each it will become whatever is abstracted from multiple experiences, actual and wishful.

One way for the child to organize his meanings effectively is to learn to listen carefully. Adults can help the small child develop this ability by sharing real experiences, giving clear and understandable directions, telling and retelling stories, reading good poetry and other interesting material consistent with his age and developmental level, rhymes and rhythms, songs and tunes. Children enjoy chiming in on favorite and familiar parts of poems, stories, songs. How children love to talk about words that shine or sparkle or tingle! What fun they have discussing the things that a character does in a story and imagining what might have happened!

The teacher can help with vocabulary by introducing new and descriptive words that relate to the child's activities and make his ideas more vivid. He introduces synonyms for familiar words, casually, to extend the child's vocabulary and deepen meaning. For instance, a dozen or so nursery school boys and girls are singing favorite songs to the accompaniment of the teacher's guitar. After finishing a song, Marlene says, "Mrs. Frank, I can sing that by myself." Mrs. Frank responds, "We have been singing together this morning. When one person sings alone it is a solo. Do you want to hear a solo?" The clustered group of children nod their heads signifying agreement, and Marlene proudly performs. "That's a solo," informs the teacher at the conclusion of the song. A few minutes later Jody suggests, "Let's sing the dog song." "All right, all together," says the teacher. "Oh, no," counters Jody. "I want to sing it by myself a . . . a . . . a solo."

● Recognizing Communicative Symbols

Life at home has already acquainted the young child with communication symbols of many kinds and varieties. He has reacted, interpreted, and behaved in accordance with many such communicative stimuli as pictures, signs, colors, shapes, sounds, and the

printed word itself. Riding in a car with the family or friends, he has seen traffic signals. Certain colors are symbols that mean STOP, GO, WAIT, WALK. Orange food may be rejected if the canned carrot baby food is not liked. Adult talk about toxic or nontoxic coloring may cause a color-oriented child to ask about a colored toy, "Is it toxic, Mother?"

Shape identification, too, becomes a communication symbol. A balloon may be termed a "ball" because it is associated with the roundness of the previously experienced ball. The child relates a dimension or shape from a past experience to help him interpret a new strange object. Shape and form "speak out" in the outlines of the tools above the home workbench, indicating where each item is to be placed. Pictures are vivid symbols and may stimulate an ideational chain of events. Only "part" of the totality is there. For example, the film that was taken on a beach outing shows the child a "part" of the activity. Knowing the "more" that is not there is symbolic. He sees the part in which he is picking up shells on the seashore. This was followed actually by a picnic which was not recorded in the movies. This makes the part of the film which is shown a symbol for recalling a total pleasant experience.

Television programs unite the visual and auditory symbols. Printed words interlace the concrete and meaningful eye-ear messages. Instant recognition of specific cereal brands in the supermarket points up the impact of the children's cereal TV advertising. The child's cries of discovery and recognition bring the parent's surprised comment and approval. The abstract written symbol has penetrated the child's awareness and has been absorbed into his world. He is reaching for new vistas, new powers.

Chapter 2

THE IDEAS BECOME INCREASINGLY VERBAL . . .

A RISING AWARENESS of his environment stimulates the child's need for communicating verbally and for interpreting what is spoken not only to him but in the verbal interchange of others. Images are created in the child's mind as a result of what he hears. Thought patterns triggered will differ in type, quantity, and quality in direct relation to the child's experience and linguistic background, as well as the background of the other person who is communicating with him. The child takes on the speech patterns of those around him gradually as they become important to him and meet his communicative needs. He imitates those whom he wishes to be like, those with speech patterns which interest him. Speech models are significant in the child's sphere: parents, teachers, peers, friends of all ages and from all walks of life, characters in stories, and later even the authors themselves. Some of these contacts occur in normal routine living; for example, the exchanges with next-door neighbors, brief encounters with store personnel on family shopping trips, extended conversations with casual visitors in the home. Other contacts may be arranged by an adult for specific purposes.

As the child begins to respond with verbal symbols, he becomes increasingly aware of his world in the responding and by this act feels new awareness. In these relationships with others language develops, and the desire to participate with verbal symbols is stimulated by perceiving and understanding relationships. He gets a "feel" for the speech of others through "trying on" diversified speech patterns from these social minglings. He hears dialects and regional expressions that may be colloquial, informal, or formal. He appropriates, either consciously or unconsciously, some of these elements for his own speech.

● Creative Language

The child's first attempts at talking should be accepted completely by those who make up his communicative world. He should feel

free to verbalize, in any form, the spontaneous expression of his ideas. Whatever these ideas are, it is important to encourage the child to express them and to feel comfortable in doing so. He needs delighted ears for his torrent of thoughts that are beginning to emerge in social verbalization. Only too often, this freedom of expression is not encouraged or accepted in the classroom situation. Teachers feel that they must direct the child into adult speech patterns; sometimes a teacher even channels youngsters into imitating the expressional ways of the teacher himself. While the teacher is a speech model through his everyday discourse, any attempt to modify directly the child's natural expression is not appropriate at this stage and actually prevents or stunts growth in creativity and sense of personal worth. Adults should be more concerned with what the child is trying to communicate and less with how he is saying it. Later on, his writing and reading environment must contain the same privileges as the earlier talking climate: opportunity to express himself freely and creatively without stricture.

A child's experimenting with oral communication increases his understanding of himself, of others, of interpersonal relationships in his ever-expanding world. New contacts with his world, everything he notices, proclaim his awareness level and make known his recognition and acceptance of a new experience and its incorporation into himself. Landmarks of perception and conception appear. The adult must encourage the child to become even more aware of his world and should use developing situations to extend this awareness. The child hears and sees things he does not fully comprehend. He hears others talking—adults, young people, older children, his peers.

Uncertainty of relationships may surface verbally and cause perplexity in the hearers. Some very small children playing house in the nursery school take part in a somewhat confusing episode as the play develops. Lisa enters the situation exclaiming, "Let me be the Mother." Immediately Janet directs, "Lisa, you can't be a Mother." Lisa protests, "Well, I want to be a Mother" to which Janet emphatically states, "No, there can only be one Mother, and Jack is the Mother." When a third child intervenes with, "Maybe Jack could be the Daddy," Janet further explains, "No, Brenda is the Daddy. There's only one Daddy."

Seeing and hearing a new object, person, place, or relationship presents novelty, and sometimes discrepancy, to a child's mind and prompts the demand for intellectual communication. As his experiences and observations widen and deepen, he perceives new dimensions of meanings which are being expressed by himself and by

others. Verbal symbols become more readily absorbed and employed in initiating and responding to the communicative environment. Listening plays a larger part as he becomes less egocentric, more able to relate to others. He can become more aware of listening for a purpose . . . to find out what he wants to know and what others are going to do, to directions to find out how to accomplish what he wants to do, to music to find out what the rhythm tells him, to stories to learn of others' experiences.

● Real-Life Encounters

Impromptu or arranged real-life encounters are another means for providing the stuff out of which the child is able to make meaningful translations of other times, other places, other happenings. Another person's words or another person's writings may stimulate images of personal experiences from which the child is able to relate, generalize, and predict consequences in novel situations.

A train experience arranged by the teacher exposes the group to new sensory associations and extends the five-year-old's thinking realm. As the teacher purchases tickets, the five-year-old takes in the details of the transaction, noting a multicolored array of cubbyholed tickets, the click-click of the dating machine, the clink of coins dropping into the cash drawer. Taxicabs, baggage, porters, passengers bustling to and fro arouse a sensation of busyness. An inspection trip of the station platforms and yards gives many pauses to wonder as the engines puff in and out, trailing a variety of railroad cars behind them. During a close-up scrutiny of a steam engine, Kim standing by the driving wheel eyingly measures the situation and exclaims, "That wheel is three times as big as me. I guess it can push a lot."

A porter demonstrates easing two seats together to make a berth in the Pullman car, which prompts Andrew to exclaim somewhat wistfully, "Oh, what a nice place to be chug-chug, toot-tooted to sleep in." The dining car, the coaches, the mail car, the baggage car, and especially the engineer's cab are regarded with awe. Excitement escalates on the train journey itself as the engine skillfully guides the train slowly out of the station through busy city streets to the outskirts, then over the countryside, through a tunnel, across a river bridge and into a small station of a neighboring town. At a later date when the mighty struggle of Piper's *The Little Engine That Could* is read or when Lenski's *The Little Train* is discussed, interpretations are verified and extended by the memorable train trip.

• Role Playing

The speech and play patterns of the four- or five-year-olds playing spontaneously in the play corner may be highly revealing. The child assuming the role of mother readily adapts her speech to the occasion. "Take your muddy feet off that chair!" she orders. The "father" child puffs his pipe, reads, and scatters the pretend newspaper and growls, "When's dinner ready?" The "children" engage in sibling squabble and a rich variety of vocal interchange. Characterization, with all the movements, habits, speech intonations and patterns, appears naturally. Such role playing precedes the child's ability to reflect on the individual characters in stories in subsequent oral and written expression. Children develop the desire and agility to respond with understanding and meaning to questions such as, "Why did the sheriff talk this way?" or "How do you suppose Betty felt when her dog was lost?" or "How would she sound when she tells her mother about it?" Experience in taking on the identity of others in dramatic play situations helps the child to interpret meaningfully. Playing out stories and experiences is role playing, too. Simple puppets help the shy child, especially, to project his feelings and extend his verbal experiences. Such activities spark language expression, broaden understanding, deepen feelings and emotions, and develop empathy.

• Speech Patterns

What do different ways of speaking indicate about people, about each one's individuality? Aren't people saying "I have enough confidence in myself and the courage to find my own ways of communication with others"? The *way* that someone says something communicates as well as the words that he uses. When the play fare is the cowboy-Indian pattern, speech flows appropriately in accordance with the child's concept of the situation. "Howdy, Pardner" sets the stage for imaginary adventure in the corral and on the range. Homely speech used among family and close friends represents a communication pattern that often has a rather quaint flavor and an idiomatic expression. "It don't make any difference," or "I can't hardly see it," or "Sure fire!" or "Right on the button!" If a child feels that there is censure or shame attached to the way in which his own family or relatives express themselves, he will usually hesitate to verbalize or may even completely "clam up." Therefore, adult acceptance of these speech patterns and colloquialisms is important.

● Personal Relationships

Close warm relationships with a friendly and understanding adult do much to satisfy the child's need for verbal communication. The teacher can help the child to develop his basic thinking skills. Specifically, this means helping the child to evaluate, to generalize, and to predict. Questions such as, "What is like this?" (making comparisons) or "What else do we know about this?" (exploring experience) prompt mental processes leading beyond superficial identifications.

● Oral Language Opportunities

How can teachers stimulate the child to talk? By planning and encouraging many small-group discussions—short ones, longer ones, spur-of-the-moment ones, child-initiated ones—all extended with an aspect of informal leisure. By providing many opportunities for one-to-one relationships with one another in the playhouse, in the library corner, at the easel. By doing things in twosomes—cleaning up, putting the blocks away, serving mid-morning or mid-afternoon juice. Much experience in small groups develops the need and the urge to communicate verbally. It is important to utilize personal experiences to extend the child's awareness in a facile and meaningful way. It is very important in this stage of language development to keep the focus on successful communication. At this time, when the child is exploring the process of translating perceptions and feelings into communicative terms, let verbal expression flow freely. Refinement of form follows refinements of understanding. Further experience with talking and listening brings increased accuracy.

● Informal Recording

The teacher can stimulate the child to express himself creatively by writing down the child's ideas and thoughts and then reading them back to him either privately or in a small group. Thus, the child speaks with the teacher's pen, as it were. He listens to the words he has said just as he really said them, uncorrected and unedited. These experiences kindle language expression, encourage sharing experiences with others, and make him feel good about himself. They make him realize he possesses ideas worthy of another's attention. And always and always, make sure that each child who wishes has a chance to contribute. Be sure that no one has been overlooked or neglected. Yet never insist on active partici-

pation. Pushing a child to express ideas only half formed or those about which he feels uncertain can make him all the more reluctant to volunteer.

A teacher may jot down various ways of saying things which are overheard in groups and add fun to such activity. "What do you think he was talking about?" the teacher might ask after such selections have been read to the group. Let children dictate or tape record stories, observations, original ways of saying things. For the very young child, read these recorded contributions either to him alone or to his group to stimulate more creativity in language. Listening to his own words read verbatim is an impetus to further language expression. Hearing what others have said and learning about communication and mutual expressions of feeling or experiences develop a respect and interest for what others have to say. Such respect and interest are essential if the child is to be receptive to the wonders of his cultural heritage.

Sequence theories are subtly upset as one watches young children discover the communication symbolism in the world around them. There is continuous learning. There are so many different ways. The "content" or "process" sequences which can be identified are per-

Problem solving through translating imaging into action.

sonal and unique to the individual. Since this is so, there is urgent need to consider the implications for teaching.

● Choice Making

There must be opportunity for the child to make choices and select alternatives. Critical thinking is shaped or influenced by choice making, even dependent upon it. Evaluating the results of these decisions is an experience in critical thinking. Three children have decided to make a beach house with blocks. In their eager play, as they burst in and out of the pretend door, their construction topples again and again. One child examines the situation, then issues orders to her companions. "Get two more blocks, big ones, and put them on here, one on each side. Now get a long block for across here." A willing construction worker steps back to look at the structure with the ready pronouncement, "Oh, I see. That's the door, a high door, so we can go in and out better." She is now able to perceive the other's purpose, expressed in concrete form.

Chapter 3

WRITTEN SYMBOLS—THE CHILD READS

THE CHILD SLIPS EASILY into putting his thoughts into writing as he sees his ideas put into print by the teacher. The relationship of ideas and thoughts with the recording of them has brought meaning to the written symbol. Now, by himself, he takes this next step naturally just as he does in speaking, whenever his own purposes and awareness and self-confidence impel him to assume the recording performance previously performed by adults. He feels, rightfully, this is his to take over, his to do. Billy, for instance, after he has painted a picture of his house, starts to write "My house," just as he has seen this done previously by the adult. But he finds that he is not sure of how to write "House." "Teacher, how do I write 'House'?" "Here, Billy," says the teacher, taking a slip of paper and writing while Billy looks on. He skips back to his picture and writes "House" in the place where he wants it on the drawing. "Ha!" he exclaims with satisfaction, "I did it!"

Jill on the same day proudly displays her picture of a turtle with the caption which she has independently scribed. She turns to Susie who sits near her and says, "See . . . It says, 'Here is my turtle.' " And Jill is reading! In this same group of children Betsy still relies on the teacher to do the recording of her emerging ideas.

A teacher must be alert to the unique growth of each of these children. One child may make bold advances, while a teacher needs to watch for the shy nudgings of another who is too timid or insecure to speak out. Later on, as a youngster gains more confidence, the adult will discover that he, too, will blossom with contributions—tiny ones, short ones, long ones, disorganized, organized, fantastic or realistic ones. As children move more and more toward expressing their thoughts in writing, interest and motivation on the part of a few in the group will produce an ebb and a flow of ideas that will become contagious; then an increasing number of children will turn to the recording of experiences in written form.

● Groups Stimulate

Groups in which the ideas of the children flow freely generate creative ideas and verbal communication. Language gems twinkle and sparkle. Let the teacher jot these down, as they are expressed, for sharing later. What a thrill for each budding author . . . his particular thought, idea, or outburst of emotion put into prose and in visible form that can be read again and again. He sees that what he does . . . what he thinks . . . what he feels . . . what he hopes . . . can be penned for future reference. The recorded thoughts and acts of other children and other people can be preserved and enjoyed in the same way, preserved by the written symbol as well as the pictorial symbol. Sandra labelled her picture "My Family." A chart tells how Danny brought a frog which now gulps happily in the terrarium. The *Morning News* reports that Diane hopes for a real "two-wheeler" on her birthday.

In more concentrated use and application of the written symbol the child feels the importance of common understandings and projections of thinking into symbols. The development of verbal symbolization must, of necessity, continue. Thinking and communicating, verbally and nonverbally, and understanding what others are expressing are built upon concrete experiences and language facility. Continuing spiral-like interaction between the individual and his experiences develops increasing competence in communication.

● Precision in Communicating

The need for a more precise way of communicating becomes imperative as the child grows. He has already discovered that a certain degree of preciseness in his verbal exchange with others is essential in order to be understood and to comprehend what others mean. What things help the child in developing verbal expression that is clear to others? The real experiences. The clarifications through interchange. The validating through conversational feedback. The chance to experiment and to use various and original attempts to communicate in social situations.

● Stored for Retrieval

With the young child there slowly emerges this wider horizon of intercommunication, which is extended as he watches the adult recording the thoughts of others. The developing realization that the

thoughts and experiences of others can be kept and shared is an extension of his world of communicating. Other people have the urge to communicate in this way, the child notes. There is variety. There are differences in interest and in experiences and in what is chosen to be shared with others. The retrieval-referral concept is born. There is function to this written symbol.

Child's own recorded ideas provide bases for understanding what reading *really* is.

More and more, as the teacher provides opportunities for recording and rereading of thoughts and feelings, the child will want to "see" what he said. "Read it to me again," he will often say, and his eyes will watch hungrily as his spoken word arises from the symbol. He will be eager to retrieve his ideas again and again and to learn how to recognize the recorded abstractions which are becoming more familiar to him. The child reads! And he reads in the true sense of the word, with a real understanding and comprehension stemming from a rich storehouse of ideas that abound in his world and are a part of him.

• Others Communicate

As the child feels the need to express himself, he feels the even greater need to receive responsive communication from others, first verbally, then through the written or printed symbol. He has experienced many symbols: street signs, traffic signals, store displays, shelf labelling, television commercials, printing on food products, and many other varied stimuli in his environment. The child of today has been "reading" long before nursery school. He asks questions. "What does that say, Mommy?" "What do you call that, Daddy?" And then the television commercials appear with eye-catching scenes and a dynamic voice well trained in the art of persuasion. They not only show the printed symbol coupled with emotionally charged stimuli but often incorporate some device which guides the child in his left-to-right eye movements along the printed message.

Other realizations emerge. The written symbol can be a link, a means of identifying. Writing . . . reading . . . talking . . . listening. Oral and written expressions are ways of sharing feelings, ideas, experiences. Listening to others and having others listen to him activate thought processes which help the child extend personal interrelationships.

• Faces of Listening

Listening is a term used by various people with many connotations. When it is used in the context of "teaching children to listen," it usually means we want children to *try to hear* for the purpose of receiving communication through some sound or sounds. It might also mean only, "Pay attention to what I am saying!" or "Do what I tell you to," as when the teacher criticizes a child's performance or behavior by saying, "You did not listen to what I said." Such statements on the part of the teacher imply expectation of implicit conformity and obedience, an expectation which tends to destroy initiative and block communication. It is probable that the child had listened but that he had perceived the message in a different way. Or, it may be that he understood what had been said but preferred to do the task in a way more important to him.

Paying attention, "minding," hearing, or receiving communication—like learning itself—cannot be secured by outside command. A child can always "turn it off." Each person decides, consciously or unconsciously, which of the myriad sounds he will pay attention to. It is obviously impossible and undesirable to try to be aware of all,

so each person becomes selective in what he lets through. He is usually aware of what he wants to hear . . . what meets his needs . . . what makes him think more of himself . . . what indicates the acceptance, recognition, approval of others. He often blocks out or turns off what he does not want to hear . . . what interferes with meeting his needs . . . what makes him think less of himself . . . what indicates failure, disapproval, or rejection. He "turns it off," usually with little or no awareness, when a stimulus would interfere too much with what he wants to do, when it is too negative or threatening to his concept of self for him to be able to deal with it.

Nevertheless, the individual cannot always "turn on" his listening even though he might want to. Many factors may intervene, such as being afraid he won't hear, being afraid it won't be what he wants to hear, not daring to believe it will be what he so much wants to hear.

Perception operates on a personal basis in all communication areas. A child may misinterpret or "hear" just the opposite of what is said, or he may hear it the way he wants it to be. Hearing what he has come to expect is another misconception. If he has received too many critical and punitive comments, he may have come to expect them and may perceive any neutral or even positive reaction as a negative one.

● Developing Listening

It is essential to recognize that the very complex matter of listening is far from the simple direct activity usually assumed in many discussions of its development. The questions which need to be considered are, first, can the child hear physically in an adequate way; second, is he ready to listen or is he too involved in implicit or explicit activity to be able to change his focus; third, will he perceive what he is expected to hear as encouraging or at least not too threatening to deal with; fourth, how has he perceived similar comments in the past; and fifth, to what extent will his expectancies distort the message? So it must be recognized that one cannot teach a child to listen in the direct sense any more than one can teach a child to read or to write in the same sense. Rather, the climate needs to be established and experiences provided which are most likely to lead to the development of these abilities.

There is, however, another aspect of listening which must be considered. Listening is not just a taking-in process any more than is reading. Receiving communication whether by ear or by eye makes

no difference if the child does nothing with it—if he does not react to it in terms of feeling, understanding, or behavior. A communication becomes useful as he deals with it more effectively, as he expands his ability to think about it and with it in an increasing variety of ways.

Just before Christmas the kindergarteners are preparing to make family gifts. The teacher decides they will make place mats. All children are given materials and directed in the processes. The teacher notes Martha is not following instructions and asks, "Martha, did you listen to what you are to do?" She responds, "Yes, but I don't want to make a place mat. Mommy says she has more than she knows what to do with."

● Freedom to Express Uniqueness

When the child starts to talk, he says words that are important and meaningful to him, ones that express his ideas the best way that he can. So should it be with writing. When he begins to write, he should be free to say it *his* own way, as short or as long, in whatever form satisfies him at that time. Of course, the ideas are self-selected, his own choice of happenings, feelings, and wonderings which bubble from within and on to the paper. He sees a purpose in preserving them in this manner.

Children must feel free to express themselves in their own ways and to know that their ways are acceptable to the adult. As a teacher, brush aside any traditional attitudes which impede the flow of language from the children. Write it down just as he *really* said it! This is important! It signifies the child's stage of development, his uniqueness, his operating contexts, his emerging communicative self. No teacher-made revising, please! Just verbatim as it tumbled or exploded from the child's lips. Poor grammar? Let it go! Please don't correct it now. Let's "talk" the writing in his own words in the child's own way. Capture his most precious possession—himself. His language changed, he feels rejected and cannot identify with another's form of speech. Remember that the uncoordinated, cumbersome self-feeding attempts gradually ease into more refined eating behavior. So it will be with his language. As he experiments with words, phrases, and sentences, let his chatter express his urgings. Polishing will come later when the *child* is ready; then it will be his own and not yours. No more, "What's a *better* way to say it," or "What's a *better* word to use?" What is "better" anyway? Your way or the child's way? Better for him?

● Acceptance and Assistance

A child should never feel that his initial recording of an idea must be complete or free from error. It should be accepted as he has actually expressed it with his own language and his own feelings. At this early stage a child seldom sees any purpose in rewriting. It is more useful and important, from his point of view, to "do another." The help he will need is getting down words and phrases which he does not feel that he can manage on his own. Perhaps the most important guideline for the teacher is this: when the lack of mechanics really gets in his way of communicating meaning and ideas, this is the time to help.

In moments of a child's intense concentration in communicating, the help he asks for should always be readily supplied in order to preserve the flow of ideas. Demands for assistance are many and varied. They are usually accompanied by an urgent NOW, as the actively stimulated writer guards his trend of thought jealously, valuing it over the mechanics of transition to the abstract symbol. The teacher can make himself more readily available to meet the needs of the children by having slips of paper or other devices prepared in advance so that specific words can be written for individual children when they feel they need them. Most certainly, however, the sole resource cannot be centered in the teacher himself, either for practical purposes or for the encouragement of independence.

● Developing Independence

The teacher can make the children aware of a number of alternatives. When a child needs a word or words which he feels he cannot write, he may leave a blank space for each and go on with the idea; or he may guess at the way to write it, putting down the beginning letter or letters or as much of it as he can in any way which will suggest the word he wanted there; or perhaps a neighbor can help; or he may remember seeing it on a chart, a book, the board.

Children differ in their initiative and motivation to follow through with self-help. For instance, upon returning from a trip to the airport, the children are writing about their experiences and feelings. Harry writes, "I liked to see the planes. One big jet was going to _____." "How do you write 'Hawaii'?" he asks. "Bring your story to me," suggests the teacher, "and I'll help you." But one distraction after another arises, and later when the teacher says, "I can help you now," Harry replies, "Oh, I found it already; it was

on a picture on the bulletin board," Linda, on the other hand, simply quits trying when she is unable to write the word she needs. She needs considerably more attention from the teacher and perhaps a helpful peer who can encourage her toward confidence.

● Utilizing Resources

If the teacher is to nurture desires for self-expression, it is essential to provide resources which will facilitate the processes of recording and help children to become satisfyingly independent in such ventures. Children, too, soon recognize the problem of more requests put to the teacher than can be fulfilled, and they begin to search for alternatives close at hand. As self-confidence increases and the urge toward independence grows, children feel the frustration of being dependent upon the teacher. The long-range goal is to help the writer become increasingly independent in helping himself.

The classroom environment should be replete with resources and stimulating centers of interest. The child's awareness of these grows as he becomes more self-sufficient in his seeking. The room must be arranged to draw young writers toward references such as labels; chart stories; charts of related words such as holidays, actions, weather, descriptive terms; children's stories; pictorial aids like seasonal posters, picture files, calendars, diagrams, maps; reference books such as dictionaries, pictionaries. Story books which have been read or shown to the group contain vocabulary which can be utilized by the children in answering their writing needs. Personal collections of words and phrases may be made. Children may also use their own collected writings for referral.

The teacher's responsibility is to help each child become aware of these writing aids and to encourage him to develop skill in using them so that he may have more satisfaction in putting his ideas into written form. However, the child must use the resources available as aids to satisfy *his* needs, not as adult requirements for more accurate writing. If he feels this kind of pressure, his enthusiasm may wane and the amount of his writing may decrease and the quality of his material deteriorate.

Through developing resourcefulness the child may invent methods unique to him. He may discover personal avenues that lead to independence in communicating symbolically. Teachers do not always accept this vital originality in areas directly related to specific skill development. Rather they may discourage children from using their own creativity in thought development and thus destroy the urge to

seek novel methods in approaching their writing needs.

How does the teacher help the child to look for and utilize resources? For example, when a child queries the spelling of a word, the teacher may respond, "Where do you think you may find it?" "Do you see it somewhere in the room?" "Do you remember seeing it in a book?" "What book might have it?" "Let's look together." As the teacher watches, the child searches. The adult should note the method and the alacrity with which the child locates what he is needing—or the inefficient method or ineffective approach he may use. Is this activity frustrating to the child? If so, he may not be ready for independent search at this time, and the teacher should plan to supply or have a peer supply all needed words until he develops more confidence. There may be inefficiency in attack, such as looking over the same source several times, ignoring other possibilities, giving up too easily after too brief an effort. Here the teacher might ask, "Where else might we look?" Helping the child to direct his attention to the sources in his immediate environment will aid him in becoming more independent in his spontaneous use of them. On the other hand, the skillful teacher will not permit a child who, because of immaturity or other learning problems, is not ready for independent effort to become discouraged and apathetic by denying him immediate adult help in converting his self-expression efforts into writing.

● Releasing Individual Potential

The growth of all individuals comes about through a buoyant, dynamic environment which is consciously cultivated by the adults and children through sensitive interaction with the constellation of ever-evolving needs and satisfactions. All participants are perpetually creating, using, and altering elements of the environment in accordance with their spiralling growth. There is a continual release of individual potential, sharing of ideas, reacting to suggestions, encouraging of attempts to record significant events, proffering of specific help, developing of reading appetites, showing of appreciation for accomplishments. Thus a language-thinking climate is created which stimulates communicative desires and skills toward increasing effectiveness.

● Developmental Sequence

The developmental sequence in communication starts in infancy

and continues as an integral part of the development of thought processes. Parents and teachers need to be aware of the child's communicative behavior from babyhood on. Parents see him become increasingly aware of the meaning in others' verbal and nonverbal communications as he reacts to them and then expresses his meaning nonverbally, later moving toward gradually increasing verbal precision. As he attempts new complexities of expression with an unfamiliar other person, he sometimes finds he is not understood. While he is often unsure of others' communicated ideas, he is only puzzled and frustrated when others do not understand him. Within limits and in differing ways he will find this to be true for the rest of his life! He eventually comes to realize that his ideas and those of others may be similar or may be different, that he can get ideas from doing things, from seeing others doing things, from looking at things, and from looking at pictures.

Since communication develops as thinking skills increase, adults by listening to one can diagnose the other. Teachers need to be alert to the relationships a child expresses. Does he recognize problems and is he able to put them into words? Does this verbalization help him in solving the problem? Does it bring about interaction with others to attempt a solution? How do peers react to his communicating? Does his speech actually involve them, help them relate to the situation, or is it merely parallel talk? In other words, is he still involved solely in self, or has his thinking developed to encompass others, and does his communication reflect this? And the child's imaginings: what do they tell of him, his world, his feeling of freedom to express his thinking, knowing adults will show respect and acceptance? And if there is no apparent imagination, does it mean he has not the verbal skill to express his thinking, or does it mean a lack of trust in those with whom he shares?

In another context the child's communicative-thinking abilities begin to deal with recorded meanings. He may experience books early, realizing that they have pictures and that grownups can tell him stories about them, then realizing that *he* can tell stories about the pictures. He sees marks which he knows adults use as they tell ideas, and he knows adults can write marks to express ideas. Even he can "read" some marks: his name, Coca-Cola, Batman. He learns that he can express ideas in a picture and then tell the story. It comes as a new understanding that when he tells the story about his picture, the teacher can put it down in writing, then read back just what *he* said in his story. Because they are his ideas, he understands them, and they are important for they have personal mean-

ing. Thus, it is very easy for him to read them.

Through using the skills he has attained by reading more and more of his own ideas, he finds he can read his friend's ideas when he has heard them dictated. Since he is familiar with his friend's way of talking, he even finds he can read his recorded stories when they parallel his own experience. As his stories and those of his friends are made into books which others can read, the teacher can help him understand that this is what books are: ideas somebody wrote down so others could read them. He knows why he writes stories and he comes to speculate on why others wrote what they did. He is becoming familiar in a meaningful way with the concept of authorship. Thus the two major concepts of communication develop—meaning and purpose.

Chapter 4

CHILDREN DIFFER

PERHAPS AT NO TIME are individual differences more sharply drawn and similarities more closely noted than in the behavioral profiles of identical twins. Here are two—Alan and Gordon. They are four years old, together at home, separated at school. How does their behavior differ? Does the difference reflect each child's level of critical thinking? And is this related to a specific situation at a particular time? How can a teacher encourage a child to use his thinking processes to best advantage in problem solving and evaluating, to deepen and extend his potential, to develop and extend awareness and insight? What role can the adult play? Does a child send messages that go unrecognized by the adult or ignored or misinterpreted? Note how the teachers react to some of the language and behavioral patterns of these boys. What future planning can be envisioned? How will the adults in the nursery school nurture and encourage these two children to grow and mature, each at his own rate?

Meet Alan and Gordon through the eyes of an observer. How does their language illustrate the kind and level of thinking that is involved? Does language indicate the general maturity of the two boys? What does it tell about their ability to relate to members of their peer group or to adults in their environment? How do their teachers help each twin develop and extend verbal ability? How do they challenge each to think critically?

• A Vignette

ALAN. Listen to Alan as he talks about the pictures in a favorite story book, *Caps for Sale,* while later his own drawing efforts inspire a minimum of verbal expression, oriented mainly to purpose and planning rather than to narration of content.

"Look what I found," he says to the visitor and he brings the book, *Caps for Sale.* "Monkeys, see they got caps," he begins. Then

he points to a man in the picture, "Takes his cap off. . . . And now they are going. Where are they going? . . . Where are the caps? . . . They're brown, they're blue. . . . But these . . . dancing with his feet." (He refers to the man in the picture.) "His name is Karen. See him hiding behind the tree. He sees some monkeys. The monkeys get the caps." The teacher speaks to Alan, "You like that story, don't you, Alan? Why do you like it?" "The monkeys. . . . See there are more monkeys in the tree. The man takes his cap off." "Then what happens, Alan?" the teacher asks. Alan continues, "Then the man saw the monkeys with all the caps." He turns to the visitor. "Nice book," he comments. "Why is it a nice book, Alan?" she asks. He now pretends to read the book. "He saw some monkeys. Then they go up in a tree. Then the man gets the caps. He puts them all on his head. He is in the tree. He doesn't have his hat on. He threw it away." Alan stops and looks at the visitor, who asks, "What's the book about?" "Caps for sale," says Alan, "but nobody wants to buy any." Then, after closing the books, he explains, "He's hollering, 'Caps for sale! Caps for sale!' " But again the book makes its bid for a chance for him to verbalize and he opens to a page and says, "He's taking off his hat. See these. They are coming down like flying saucers. . . . He's calling, 'Caps for sale.' "

Now Alan picks another book, *Two Little Gardeners*. He verbalizes as he looks at the pictures, "They are planting seeds . . . then there was . . . then they went to working . . . then they sprinkle the garden. . . . There's a monster in the garden." And now juice time, but the books still pull his interest as he adds, "There's a pumpkin. It's not a monster pumpkin. . . . Look at these toys." With a final fondling of *Caps for Sale,* he looks at it, puts it back on the shelf and says, "I put it away."

Later, Alan's own drawing efforts inspire far less than one might expect in the way of imaginative comment. Watch him as he alternately uses first his left hand and then his right in manipulating a crayon. He relishes the activity, for he looks up and smiles at the teacher, who casually comments, "Tell me about your picture, Alan." Says he, "A man." "What about him, Alan?" the teacher inquires.

Alan turns over the paper and begins to use the crayon, again alternating left and right hands. "I make a monster," he comments to the visitor. Then . . . "Look what I did to myself. I hurt myself," and he points to the scab on his chin. "I hurt myself at home," he explains. Now he goes to the supply table and gets more paper. "Look, I'm going to make it again. . . . Do you like me?" he asks

the visitor. "Yes," she says. "Robert doesn't like me," Alan volunteers to the visitor. He leaves, returning shortly with three pieces of paper. He continues to draw, now with his left hand. "These are for my Mom," he says. "One of these will be Gordon's." Then to the teacher, "One of these gonna be Mommy's. . . . That's the sunshine," he says, referring to his drawing. "Mommy will be happy when I make this." Now he goes for more paper. "One of these will be yours," Alan tells the visitor. To the teacher he says, "I gave one to the lady."

GORDON. Gordon is playing cards with the Batman deck in the play corner with two other children. Listen to him as he asks the teacher about the cards which have captions at the bottom telling who is in the picture.

"What this say?" he shouts to the teacher, who is across the room. He refers to a card which he is holding up for her to see. "What do you think it might say?" asks the teacher. He does not reply but goes back to the table. Soon, he is up again, this time with another card. "Teacher, what this say?" he calls to her across the room. "Whose picture is on the card?" she asks him. Again, he does not reply but goes back to the table to the card game. He repeats this same behavior five more times before his attention is diverted elsewhere.

Gordon now talks about his drawing to the visitor. It is crude, primitive and abstract, consisting of spirals and circles crayoned onto a piece of manila paper, with no seeming purpose or plan, the result of pure motor pleasure through the experiencing of the circular movement of hand and arm as his black crayon recorded his efforts. "Here," he volunteers, "that's a spider. So he goes around like this . . . like Mark's spider. . . . Here's a butterfly. I got a hurt finger. I got it in the car . . . the door."

Back to the subject of his drawing: "He has a mouth. He bited me. He thought this was a carrot. . . . He can't get my fingers up here. . . . And I caught a frog . . . near home. . . . I caught a butterfly. I stepped on the butterfly. He went away and I got him. I wanted him to be dead. . . . I wanted him to hold still. . . . And I caught a frog . . . a baby frog. He didn't like it. . . . He said, 'Ouch.' I said, 'It'll be all right.' He wanted to go in the bath tub. I gotta go now." (Gordon is referring to juice time.)

Gordon now goes to the washroom where he scrubs his hands with a brush and remarks to the visitor, "This is sort of a nice place for boys and girls." (His most mature sentence of the morning.) Juice time follows with no initiatory conversation from Gordon

although he had invited the visitor to sit by him. Following this period, the children put on their wraps and leave for the play yard. Gordon joins the rest of the group but not without pausing to hit a girl on her head with his cap. She laughs.

● Comments and Analyses

Gordon and Alan show interesting contrasts. Gordon can relate to an adult with seemingly mature observations and sentence structure but follows a more immature language pattern when with his peer group. He is not disposed to answer the teacher who attempts to help him extend his thinking about the Batman cards. He enjoys weaving an imaginative story from a crude drawing which contrasts with his paucity of expression in more realistic situations. Gordon's language patterns vary from baby talk to full sentences. He does not appear to have an extended interest in books and their content. He is aware that printed symbolism exists, as is demonstrated by his requests for the interpretation of the symbols on the Batman playing cards. Nevertheless, he himself makes no attempt at the retrieval process.

Alan, on the other hand, experiences much enjoyment from retrieval. He deals with previously read stories in his own way for his own purposes with a positive attitude toward books. Pictures are a wellspring of verbal expression for him. He explains them and can put into words various aspects of the story. He enjoys playing the role of reading and sharing a story. He summarizes *Caps for Sale* and injects an extrapolatory statement. He uses figures of speech and connects outside experiences with the pictures and stories.

When verbalizing about his own creative drawing efforts, however, Alan shies away from the discussion of imaginative content. He limits his comments to labeling and his purpose for making it. Only casually does he refer to his own drawing which has been made from realia. His drawing does reflect current feelings and sensory impressions—the sun beating in from the nursery window this morning, for example. He is able to share a part of his school experience with an absent person by recording it in pictorial symbolism. The pictures in *Caps for Sale* stimulate explanations. Alan shows what they mean to him. He shares his thoughts and feelings with another, the visitor, a peer. He identifies with the story characters through role playing. He can summarize the content compactly, showing insight and objectivity. He shows evidence of

GORDON. Gordon is actively engaged in random play centering around the Batman program seen on TV the evening before. "I get 'im," Gordon shouts now and then. "I got to throw these there . . . O. K.?" He refers to the colored rings from a Play Skool toy. *"Don't* throw them *there!"* warns another child, trying to pull Gordon back to the Batman play. But Gordon continues to throw. Now he jumps over the cabinets in the play corner and goes to a window overlooking the side play yard. The teacher who is nearby asks, "Is there another window we look out of?" Gordon does not reply. "What interesting things can you see out of the other window?" This draws Gordon to the front window where he becomes fascinated with the goings-on in the street below.

Then he returns to the Batman play. "Batman, I'm climbing over," he shouts. He picks up a broom and pounds the table to emphasize his point. He is completely oblivious of a girl who is sitting there. She is passive and does not react either to the broom or to Gordon.

Gordon screams and runs back to Batman climbing over the cabinets again. The teacher who is nearby calls Gordon over to her. "Is that a good thing to do?" she asks. Gordon ignores this with "Yeah, there's water coming out," and he begins picking up the table and putting it down. Contagion sets in and the other children join in. This noisy activity is stopped when the girl calls out, "Batman, I'm hungry."

"Help!" screams Gordon, running with a chair over his head across the room to an indoor climbing rack. Nothing happens. He puts the chair down, runs to a cupboard, and brings out a basket. This act brings a reaction from the teacher, "Gordon, tell me what you plan to do with the basket." He does not answer. He puts the basket back and rejoins the group in the play corner.

● Comments and Analyses

In dramatic play, Alan and Gordon show certain interesting contrasts. Gordon's ability to use imagery in creating a role sparked by a television program, Batman, shows his imaginative flair. He seems always available to other stimuli and distractions, picking up his role-playing activity between his scattered diversions. Alan, on the other hand, shows a preference for the more concrete appeal of the tea party with the actual dishes as "props." Well-organized Alan brings the logical sequence of the tea party episode to its acceptable conclusion: party over, the departure, and back to home base. In

having developed a feeling for books and an attitude toward this particular one when he says, "Nice book." He connects books with language. The written symbol already represents interesting things that can be enjoyed again and again whenever he chooses.

Next, listen to the two boys as they relate to their peer groups. Both become involved in dramatic play. Do they differ in the way they communicate with other children? How do the two teachers provide support and encouragement, foster communication, develop interrelationships?

● Another Vignette

ALAN. Alan has been constructing with blocks. Now he says, "Let's go get the kids." Note the same organization of play sequence and the sustained interest which he exhibited previously in his contact with the favorite book. As he reaches the other side of the room he says, "Boys, boys, let's have a tea party." He walks over to the dishes with two other children and they pretend to drink tea. "Come over," he urges the others. "That's a good tea party," he comments. Then he starts to put the cups and dishes back into the box. Another child intrudes, "I'll break some." Michael does not quite grasp this. "Break some?" he asks. Then another boy, Freddy, puts his arm around Alan, "Come on. Let's go home." "Yes, let's go home. Goody-bye," says Alan. "I have to go to bed," he says as he arrives back in the block area.

"Oh, oh. There's Peggy! How are you doing, Peggy?" She doesn't answer.

"Let's go to the tea party," says Freddy. "Here we go," says Alan, "let's get in the car." "Where can I go in?" asks Freddy. "In here," says Alan, "through the door." A block from the "car" falls. "What happened?" asks Alan. Nobody answers. "I'm going to drive," he says as he turns the wheel around vigorously. He begins to vocalize driving noises, "Zzzzz . . . Zzzzzzz . . . Rrrrrr . . . Shzzz . . . Zzzzz. Now we are over to your friend's house." "Okay," says Freddie. "Now we are over to your friend's house," Alan repeats. At this point the dramatic play comes to a halt and Alan goes to a table, pulls a box of crayons toward him, and begins to draw. He looks up and smiles at the teacher who comes near the table. "We went to a tea party," he volunteers. "Did you have a good time?" He smiles and nods. "Tell us about the tea party in sharing time," she adds casually. "The others will like to hear about it." She moves on without forcing a response from Alan.

GORDON. Gordon is actively engaged in random play centering around the Batman program seen on TV the evening before. "I get 'im," Gordon shouts now and then. "I got to throw these there . . . O. K.?" He refers to the colored rings from a Play Skool toy. "*Don't* throw them *there!*" warns another child, trying to pull Gordon back to the Batman play. But Gordon continues to throw. Now he jumps over the cabinets in the play corner and goes to a window overlooking the side play yard. The teacher who is nearby asks, "Is there another window we look out of?" Gordon does not reply. "What interesting things can you see out of the other window?" This draws Gordon to the front window where he becomes fascinated with the goings-on in the street below.

Then he returns to the Batman play. "Batman, I'm climbing over," he shouts. He picks up a broom and pounds the table to emphasize his point. He is completely oblivious of a girl who is sitting there. She is passive and does not react either to the broom or to Gordon.

Gordon screams and runs back to Batman climbing over the cabinets again. The teacher who is nearby calls Gordon over to her. "Is that a good thing to do?" she asks. Gordon ignores this with "Yeah, there's water coming out," and he begins picking up the table and putting it down. Contagion sets in and the other children join in. This noisy activity is stopped when the girl calls out, "Batman, I'm hungry."

"Help!" screams Gordon, running with a chair over his head across the room to an indoor climbing rack. Nothing happens. He puts the chair down, runs to a cupboard, and brings out a basket. This act brings a reaction from the teacher, "Gordon, tell me what you plan to do with the basket." He does not answer. He puts the basket back and rejoins the group in the play corner.

● Comments and Analyses

In dramatic play, Alan and Gordon show certain interesting contrasts. Gordon's ability to use imagery in creating a role sparked by a television program, Batman, shows his imaginative flair. He seems always available to other stimuli and distractions, picking up his role-playing activity between his scattered diversions. Alan, on the other hand, shows a preference for the more concrete appeal of the tea party with the actual dishes as "props." Well-organized Alan brings the logical sequence of the tea party episode to its acceptable conclusion: party over, the departure, and back to home base. In

short, Alan is a realist. Gordon is not.

Alan's teacher is aware of his leanings in the direction of organization and sequence. Sharing his tea party experience with others will strengthen and deepen these thought patterns as he verbalizes his role-playing activity. Gordon's teacher, on the other hand, sees Gordon's creativity and also his distractibility. She brings him back to reality by asking questions which, at the time, he seems to ignore but which will surface to consciousness at a later time. "Is that a good thing to do, Gordon? What interesting things do we see out of that window?" Gordon will react to these later.

● Planning Ahead

The two teachers will share their impressions of each boy, noting similarities and differences. They will look to the home where the boys are together. How does this "togetherness" affect their behavior? Are the boys different in their play, their language, their relationships? Does one depend upon the other? In what ways do they complement each other?

What messages do these boys send out at school? How should they be interpreted (understood)? Gordon, with his insistent demands at times for his teacher's attention—what does this mean? Alan, with his lack of initiatory contact—what is he telling his teacher?

Based upon their school-home shared knowledge, each teacher will have greater insight and will be better able to help these children mature. Questions which will help to further judgment and understanding will arise. The teachers can better plan for activities that will lead the boys to develop their self-esteem. Each one is a unique individual. Opportunities are needed for mingling with peers in one-to-one tasks and in small groups. Alertness to change in behavior and language patterns will be sharpened by informal note taking at appropriate times. All this will help to generate new and creative ideas for working with the Alans and Gordons.

Chapter 5

DOWN TO BRASS TACKS

SHOWING PERSONAL INTEREST in things that are important to the children encourages many aspects of development. It encourages pupil initiative in bringing things into the classroom. It encourages pupils to share their ideas. It helps children feel they are contributing members of the group. It stimulates pursuing ideas through reading, writing, constructing, or in any one of a dozen different ways. It helps establish goals and set up new purposes.

● Encouraging Sharing Through Personal Interest

Genuine personal interest is most effective when it goes beyond merely verbal expression. The teacher's behavior needs to reflect the significance of the child's contribution. Whatever he brings in may be used some way in the day's experiences—in dramatic play, in experimentation, or in classroom displays. Because the teacher has consistently expressed sincere interest, the climate frees the group to use one child's sharing for an exciting learning activity.

"You should just see what I've got," shouted six-year-old Lloyd as he burst eagerly into the classroom a few moments before the morning bell. Holding up a large, very wrinkled, brown paper bag, he waited with all the dramatic finesse of a Broadway actor for the queries and responses of the others in the room to subside. "Well . . ." he forcefully sighed, edging his way toward a central position within the circle. "Well . . . I went out to get in the wood last night," he continued fumbling and rattling the sack as he spoke, "and guess what I found." Apparently sensitive to the impatience of the curious faces in his midst, he abandoned the guessing game and with one sweeping gesture drew from the bag what seemed like an ordinary piece of firewood with a prominent lengthwise split through the middle of it. Disappointment slowly erased the rapture from the faces surrounding him. Then the comments and groans began.

"Aw, that's nothing."
"What good is that?"
"Who wants a piece of wood?"

With perfect timing and the fullest expression of excitement, Lloyd chimed in, "But wait until you see!" As he lifted the top half of the wood off, he unveiled what was unmistakably (even to the less imaginative youngsters) a boat with two good-sized knot stacks. The circle now surveyed it with awe and wonder until their amazement was broken by Lloyd's comment, "I'm going to paint it." But before he could move toward the paints, he was smothered with a barrage of rapid-fire questions and remarks.

"What kind of boat is it?"
"I have a real boat at home."
"What kind is it?"
"Do you have any more?"
"What color are you going to paint it?"
"Can I help paint it?"
"You have to know what kind of boat it is first. What is it?"
"Will it FLOAT?"

That last question did it—even pulled the peripherals in, and the group moved en masse toward the sink to test the sailability of the boat with the uncertain nomenclature. Almost before it was realized, Lloyd's discovery in the woodshed had launched the class on a boat project which grew in fascination and activity for the next three weeks.

● Extending Vocabulary

Teachers can extend awareness of verbal meanings through their own varied use of words. Small children need frequent contact with unfamiliar words used in a familiar context and familiar words used in an unfamiliar context. Daily classroom situations provide a rich source for extended development. In the kindergarten room Darrell bustles to the teacher excitedly. "There is a new fish in the fish bowl." "Yes, we have added to our aquarium," the teacher responds.

In another situation the children are very familiar with the word "pick" in the connotation "to select." As the children are fascinated by a crew of workers digging near their play area, the question is raised, "Do you see how the man uses the pick?"

Another way of broadening and refining meaning is through

preciseness which involves increased differentiation. Howard says to Becky, "Oh, you have a new coat." Becky retorts, "This is not a coat; it is a jacket." Using this spontaneous incident, the teacher queries, "Becky, what does Howard have on?" By using informal exchanges of this type the alert teacher can add to the child's growing sense of language.

● Taping Extends Independence

The potential of the tape recorder in the classroom is great. It frees the teacher and allows children to carry out their purposes independently. It also increases opportunities for children to relate experiences and tell stories. It helps to provide for individual differences by letting children in the prewriting stage talk their stories into the recorder. The stories can be played back to a small friendship group or be reproduced on paper by the teacher later.

● Selecting Main Ideas

An opportunity for developing critical thinking arises whenever a child begins expressing his ideas through drawing or painting and uses his illustration as a basis for verbal communication. He may tell at some length about the experience which was the basis of his picture. This should be accepted and appreciated. Then he should be asked to focus on the main idea. "What is the one most important thing you want to tell us about all this?" Whatever he says is then accepted, and if still not focused, the question is repeated. If he is unable after two or three tries, it becomes evident that he is not yet capable of this kind of thinking and no issue is made of it. As he becomes able to select the main idea, the one most important to him—and incidentally his selection may not be the same as the teacher's—he becomes increasingly aware of the relative importance of ideas through actually making such selections. The teacher then records his idea, exactly as he says it, on the space at the bottom of his picture. It is from such recorded "most important ideas" that the child gradually develops much of his beginning reading competence as well as improves his powers of critical thinking. Perhaps a next step is his awareness of his basis for selection.

(A way of insuring space for recording a child's "most important idea" is to have the child fold the bottom edge of his paper up about an inch once and then a second time, leaving it folded while he makes his picture.)

● Initiating the Reading-Writing Sequence

As the teacher records the child's dictated main idea, she first writes it without comment, then reads it as a thought unit. When the child has come to understand that thoughts are read back as an integrated unit, then the teacher reports each word as she writes it, followed as before by a fluent reading. If the latter procedure is used prior to the former one, the child may come to view reading as a word by word process. The next step may be for the teacher to say letter by letter and word by word as she writes "*J-i-m* Jim *l-i-k-e-s* likes *c-o-o-k-i-e-s* cookies. Jim likes cookies." The child thus becomes aware that in order to write a word, he must know what letters to use. Soon he may say, "I can write that." Perhaps he may have been trying out writing on his own and feels confident of doing it all by himself. A more likely first writing step involves the teacher's taking his dictation on a separate slip of paper and handing it to him along with his picture. He then copies the story directly.

● Learning Letters

Letters and the part they play in building words are most effectively learned through the writing sequence rather than through reading. Good readers deal with thought units and the relationships between thought units. They recognize word groups and phrases as contributing to the expression of ideas. Hence, if children's experience is such that it focuses them on the letters or syllables in each word, they must overcome these undesirable habits before they can achieve fluency in reading. It is only occasionally that the unrecognized word needs to be analyzed. It is far more efficient to arrive at an unknown word through context wherever possible. If there is any doubt concerning the words from context alone, then and only then should the reader check particular characteristics of the word. Skills for doing this checking are best developed through situations in which children are learning to write their own stories. It is only in writing that one needs to consider letter by letter the composition of a word.

● Beginning Spelling

Group writing presents opportunities for the teacher to call for the children's help: "We want to write 'Thumper is our rabbit.' What letters will we need to use?" The group as a whole choruses

the individual letters for each word. And, surprisingly, there are usually enough voices with the correct letters to carry the less certain along with them. This procedure puts no individual child on the spot and allows children to share in the development of each other's abilities. Just as children learn to talk from the verbal interchange around them, children pick up almost without awareness the letters necessary to record ideas. Since this casual assimilation leads towards independence in writing, teachers need to become aware of difficulties in letter formation which particular pupils may show. They can then give appropriate individual help.

● Awakening Ideas

Encourage the flow of ideas about a particular topic or area to which the children have been exposed. Place a large sheet of paper with an appropriate heading in a convenient location for children to record any questions which occur to them. The list of questions can later be organized and explored in terms of group wishes.

One child recounted his personal experiences in Holland and showed some of his souvenirs. His presentation so aroused the curiosity of the group that many questions were asked. The teacher sensed that later discussions could be fruitful, so paper was posted to record wonderings. Interests included dikes, Dutch money, native dress, games Dutch children play. This increased flow of ideas led children to organize the information they had, to project logical assumptions, and to discover new ways for working on their still unanswered questions.

● Valuing Encourages Writing

The child's writing should be used liberally. As he sees others using it, the importance of recording memorable experiences increases in his own mind. One way of using the child's recorded ideas is to bind them into a book, which is then placed on the library reading table for the group to share. In the beginning the teacher needs to do the compiling and binding, but gradually children select their particular stories for binding, choose the colored paper, and do the fastening themselves. Still later, children make their own blank books in which to write by selecting cover paper and the number of sheets they want to include, then stapling them in book form.

A child places increasing value on his ideas when they are referred

to in relevant classroom activities. For instance, Kent eagerly displays a caterpillar to admiring peers, then writes a story about it. Later as the teacher is reading *I Like Caterpillars,* by Gladys Conklin, to the group, she invites Kent to share his story with the first graders. The group compares some of the ideas in it with the story that has just been read. Again, there is an opportunity to see that different authors deal with different ideas on the same topic.

The teacher can make use of a specific incident recorded by a child to bring reality to an idea expressed in a general way in a book. In a social studies situation, the material, citing a squirrel gathering and hiding nuts, recounts the storing of food for winter. It expresses the idea that people need to store food by canning or freezing. Sarah writes a story about helping her mother make applesauce and canning it. Laurie has previously written an experience about helping her mother freeze corn. The next day, when the children are looking at a series of pictures showing people preparing food for storage, the teacher refers the group to Laurie's and Sarah's stories for clarification of ideas.

Linking a real experience to a symbolic one develops thinking skills.

● Polishing the Product

When children move on to greater confidence and competence in writing, the teacher can start the author's practice of "polishing" in a small way. After a number of stories have accumulated, the child can be encouraged to select those that he wants to bind together. Before the book "goes to press," the teacher suggests he read the stories over to see if there are any changes he wishes to make since many children will be reading his "publication." Thus he begins to evaluate his writing in terms of what it communicates to others and what forms are appropriate for readers' pleasure and learning.

● Developing a Sense of Authorship

In preschool, teachers can develop the awareness that the author is a person through telling children of personal incidents in the author's life. Before reading *The Lonely Doll,* by Dare Wright, the teacher can tell the children that the doll was one which Miss Wright had as a little girl and that she decided to write a story about it. Since Edith, the doll, needed some companions in the story, Miss Wright searched through many stories before finding Mr. Bear and Little Bear who seemed just right to keep Edith from being lonely.

Through taking glimpses into the author's personal life, children begin to realize the human element behind these stories. It is easier, then, for them to view themselves as authors. Children's first picture stories with dictated texts can carry their "by-line." The teacher can "bind" a first collection of such stories into a "book" with title and author's name listed on the cover.

● Noting Authors' Writing Differences

Upon returning from visiting a nearby farm where the first graders saw many newborn lambs, some children wrote about the babies with their mothers. Whilst the writings were prompted by a common experience, the expression of ideas was highly varied. The teacher arranged a sharing session for these children so they could realize the differences in the way individual writers approach the same topic.

Kindergartener Steve brought the good news that his dog Cocoa had five puppies. He dictated the following story to the teacher:

Cocoa had five puppies.
They were all wet.
Their eyes aren't open.

Making the illustration for his story absorbed his attention for an hour.

Later that week Maureen rushed in saying, "We have three baby kittens at our house. We named them Spot, Mittens, and Boots. We're going to keep them till they get bigger; then we have to give them away." The teacher, leaving space for Maureen to draw the kittens, typed her ideas on the primary typewriter.

Sharing written expressions of similar experiences allows children to think about other authors' approaches. The teacher invites children to tell about the new babies at their houses, then reads the stories. Upon hearing Steve's story, Maureen chimes that her kittens don't have their eyes open either. Then she inquires of Steve, "What did you call your puppies?" With a shrug of the shoulders Steve responds, "Just puppies." The two children go on excitedly conversing about this important happening in their lives. The teacher notes differences in concerns and ways of expressing them, and she uses the data in planning further language experiences for each child.

● Filling in the Blanks

In the midst of listening to a story on a phonograph record, the teacher sets the needle aside and raises the question, "How do you suppose this story might end?" After much speculation, some individuals withdraw from the group to write out their ideas. One child moves to the tape recorder and spills out his thoughts, while others continue discussing possibilities. When the child who wanted to tape the ending has finished, he returns to the group and compares his ending with those currently being suggested. Another child, noticing the tape recorder is free, goes to record his ending.

As children's skills increase with this type of activity, the beginning can be omitted and children can speculate about how the story might have started. An even greater challenge is to put children into a situation of supplying plausible middles to a story. In providing either the beginning or the ending children must only extend their thinking in one direction. Devising the middle section requires the perceiving of relationships in a much more analytical fashion. Children must keep in mind the beginning and ending situations, see plausible relationships between them, and weave the whole thing

together. The teacher must be careful to preserve enough of the essence of the original story to provide working clues. If too many crucial aspects of the story are omitted, the creative urge may dwindle, since the task may be frustrating rather than challenging.

● Growth Through Decision Making

Teachers need to provide ample opportunities for children to make many and varied decisions. It is important for the teacher to review frequently in her own mind: "Just how many decisions have the children participated in recently?" "What is the nature of their decision-making participation?" "Do they need a greater range in opportunity?"

Decisions children need to have experience in making are those which each makes for himself, those which each makes that affect one or more in relation to himself, and those which are made by a group. Children need to come to recognize that making decisions about *things* is a quite different matter from making decisions which involve *people*. When other people are involved, the child needs to realize that he does not have the right to make binding decisions for them but rather that the other individual's wishes should be taken into account. It is important for the child to learn to respect the autonomy of others, to estimate how the others involved would view or feel about the issue, to solicit other points of view.

Many of the three-year-olds in the nursery school are fascinated with the pedal fire truck, with several individuals clambering to ride it at the same time. For several days this has been a problem. Brent screams, "My turn, my turn! I never get to ride it!" as he tries to pull Gayle off the truck. As Gayle hangs on, Dean comes racing up, saying, "I want to ride now." The teacher's first impulse is to inform them that it is Brent's turn; however, she realizes this opportunity should be used for decision making on the part of the children. As she enters the situation, the children all turn toward her, repeating their demands, each with the hope that she will intercede for him. She queries, "Is there a problem here?" Immediately the children all renew their demands. "How can we work it out?" asks the teacher. Dean suggests, "Let's take turns." "All right, it is my turn," responds Brent. "But I just gotted on. I just drived a little way," protests Gayle. "How far should a turn be?" probes the teacher. "Around the play yard ten times," suggests Dean. "How long would you have to wait for a turn then?" asks the teacher. "A long time, too long for me," Brent chimes in. "Well, then, how many times

should we set?" the teacher asks. "Three, three . . . only three," suggests Gayle. "Why?" probes the teacher. "We wouldn't have to wait so long," says Brent.

The teacher's function in this situation is to help the children identify the problem, come to a decision through cooperative thinking, and then help them recognize the basis for the decision. This increases their facility in oral communication as well as in the thinking skills and adds another step in the direction of independent learning.

In another decision-making incident, Sharon says to no one in particular, "I'm going to put my painting here to dry. Kevin can have that space over there for his." She skips over to the easel where Kevin is finishing up his picture and tells him, "I saved that space for yours." He responds, "I'm going to put mine over here." "Okay, maybe Agnes will want to put her picture beside mine."

While the teacher observes this bit of decision making, she wisely stays out of it completely, allowing the interaction of the children to flow freely. Through the interchange, Sharon has the opportunity to realize that others' ideas must be considered in decision making, too. Though she can decide about her own picture herself, the extent to which she can plan for another is limited.

● Classifying Promotes Thinking

The ability to classify can be developed in many kinds of situations. In the fall many seeds intrigue children, from pine cones to horse chestnuts, from touch-me-nots to milkweed pods. They can decide that these should be put together in a collection labeled "seeds" and added to as anyone finds a different kind. This would not be the place to put a pretty stone or a shell from the beach, or even a plant or a flower or a funny stick. These objects need places of their own with their own classifying labels. Things having to do with electricity might be in another area: batteries, door bells, buzzers, light bulbs, sockets. Such centers increase children's awareness of the many kinds of objects in their environment, help them think of these in categories, and encourage them to bring things which enrich the classroom situation for all.

Another situation for classifying is related to the providing of vocabulary resources for the children's writing. Charts can be made for different types of words: "Our Family," where all words relating to different family members are listed; "Pets"; "Wild Animals"; "Things We Do," which includes action verbs. As children need

or think of other words, they are added to the appropriate chart. These classifying experiences extend children's vocabularies as well as increase their awareness that there are different types of words for different purposes. Of course, all collections provide very useful bases for varied verbal interchange as well as inspiration for authorship.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY

THE COMMUNICATIVE WORLD into which the child is born is complex and exciting and holds tremendous potential for the development of rich language and stimulating thought. From the very beginning, the infant is exposed to many and varied symbols of communication. As his awareness of these increases, concepts begin to develop. Concepts are unique to each individual and result from his own personal reaction to the surrounding stimuli. Later on, common meanings emerge and serve as the basis for communicating with others.

Parents and educators can help the young child organize his communicative world by providing experiences that are concrete and commensurate with his understanding. Adults can help a child to develop critical thinking through encouraging him to become more aware of his observations and to verbalize his interpretations of the world around him.

Home and classroom experiences should be planned so that through listening and speaking the child will extend his concepts, ideas, and speech patterns. Thus he will deepen his ability to understand others and to express his own ideas and thoughts.

Creative language expression is the foundation from which the child moves into the realm of meaningful written symbols. Creativity in language means that the child's ideas are not manipulated into structured printed symbols that do not reflect the child's verbal offerings. The child's ideas ought not to be hewn to conform to artificial and unrealistic textbook presentations which are often stilted and unlifelike in their patterns.

The child develops a more precise form of communication both oral and written through sharing his ideas with his peer group. Independence in written expression develops through a stimulating classroom environment with many concrete materials to which the child can refer for his own uses. The teacher's function is to increase the child's awareness of these materials and to encourage him to make use of them.

Parents can encourage growth by valuing the child's early efforts, by encouraging him to process his ideas, by feeding his curiosity, and by showing interest in his verbalisms about written and printed symbols in his environment.

When creative oral and written expression is encouraged, decision-making becomes part and parcel of the activity. Selections must be made to accomplish his purposes, to organize logically, and to express ideas more precisely. Most important of all, in making selections he learns to experiment creatively with words and phrases to produce the desired effect. This is the very heart of the process of critical thinking.

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